

De Boice, Benjamin

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Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Benjamin DeBoice

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TRIBUTE TO LINCOLN

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I count it a signal honor to be allowed to pay tribute to the immortal Lincoln on this, the 69th anniversary of his death. In honoring him today we ourselves are immeasurably honored. When the assassin's bullet took its toll, this April day was made forever sacred to his memory, but nowhere so much as here in the place that was once his home. However unworthy, Springfield is enriched by the tradition of his life and hallowed by the tender keeping of his mortal form. Indeed, we feel that much is left, a special privilege of understanding, to those who "dwell in Springfield on holy ground, glorified and hallowed by his labor."

So captured are we by this Lincoln we have the temerity to call our own, who of us does not feel that we possess him in perfect understanding, could we but find words to express his tremendous hold upon our hearts? It is inevitable, therefore, that in that confidence, and drawn by the irresistible impulse of our day - the Lincoln appeal - we seek to investigate the mystery which is life through the mystery which was the man. For with his death, his life, which was a groping and a growth toward light, became a lamp unto our feet. By that life he contributed more than any other man to the greatest cause there is, man's understanding and management of himself.

Yet, Oh Lincoln -

As in your strange world of many contradictions,
We wrestle in a groping search to find
The secret of your life's benedictions -
Were they bestowed on matter, on spirit or on mind?

And, Oh soul of Lincoln -

As we would-bes, and might-have-beens and maybes,
Ask the power to solve life by your startling subtlety,
Down your days you say to us, "It is too great a task,"
And at the grave you leave us - mystery.

To ponder the fruits of the spirit in him is to rate him the most priceless gem in all the treasury of our human experience. Yet he whose spiritual splendor rose so grandly as to comprise in itself our modern miracle, was cut from the same cloth as our own human frailty.

In how strange and enduring a fashion the sublime and the ordinary mingled in him. He was ever and always the golden mean of many contradictions which made him the most human of men, yet of almost superhuman endowment.

A man of less sensitive vision would have been self-perfect with vastly less cause, or complacent, even stolid in shortcoming. His was meekness without stupidity and reason with reverence, yet his great mentality found, even as lesser ones have and must, that logic applied to the invisible affirmations of the spirit is only rescued from despair by faith spurred on by blessed hope and anguished need. The wisdom of God is beyond man's foolishness to fathom. Even Abraham Lincoln could not know man's destiny, but could know man has a destiny. Certainly, no one was ever a more conscious part of God's destiny for man!

In the terrible madness of Civil War, when he prayed and wept, in the days of his Gethesemane, when at last he said he had nowhere else to go for help but to his God, there was no slightest affectation between him and his ever-present strength and inner communion. To this one thing he clung, his belief in a kindly God - "He Who made the world

and still governs it," even when in a broken moment he said he had lost faith in everything else. He was, he said, even more concerned that "myself and His people are on the Lord's side," than "that God will be on our side." He desired, not to use God, but to be used by God.

His life gave striking impetus to that oldest, most insistent thought of the human soul. The custodians here at the Tomb tell us of those who say "before his sacred clay" - "I am an unbeliever, but I wonder could it be, that great soul is dead." We do wonder! For after all analysis of Lincoln, his greatness and his commonness, his great reason and conscience, his tender love, his humor and sadness, his poetic mysticism, his realism, all tempered by common sense and sanity, something rare and wondrous remains, which was the distinctive charm of his personality. Something Dr. Newton calls "peculiar, particular and unique," which was the inner man; something akin to the better angels of our nature. Every man feels to this day that all that lies deepest and best in his nature, in small, is mirrored in Lincoln in large, to vastness. For all his amazing growth, brought about by a lifetime of measuring up under mounting burdens and grief, and the mellowing of the years in God's fiery furnace, the qualities which came into final flowering had lain in his soul from the beginning, and were the same in the end. We cannot conceive of this strange spiritual essence, for short the soul, resisting all the tortures of his stay in the flesh, produced at all this cost but to be lost. Science may know us as passing scum on the face of a minor planet, but even as a wind passed over him and he was gone, we know he achieved something of eternal life.

Skepticism can answer every argument religion can present, save one. For that one there can be no answer - a life lived like that of Abraham Lincoln. It is not by giving formal assent to a creed predicated on the life of Christ, but a life like Christ's, exhibiting without pretentiousness the fruits of the spirit that conviction is carried to a disbelieving world. The good life must have, like his, belief that all life has purpose, fulfillment and worthy end.

The world can never mistake the answer of Abraham Lincoln to the eternal question as to the advisability of losing one's life to save it. For he lived, not upon things, but upon convictions; put his conscience above convenience, and trusted implicitly in the ten thousand angels of truth for his vindication. Moreover, he believed that there are causes so worth while that a man is bound to sacrifice life itself for their preservation. He said "I am nothing, truth is everything, let me go down linked with the truth." Despite all the stupidities, cruelties and tragedies of our curious heritage, he had a firm belief that it is intolerable to suppose that the human soul is eternally doomed to unfitness. He himself is convincing proof that goodness, rightness, moral stamina, charity and brotherhood are not chimerical dreams, but correspond to reality in the universe. No man was ever endowed with more common sense and shrewdness, but never once did he retreat from his might idealism. Never once did he falter beneath the crushing burden that was his on earth. So great was his hope, that without the slightest hesitation he threw his very best out into the broad stream of time confident that it would some time reach a shore on which it would grow forever.

So deep was the impression he made upon humanity, and so nearly did he meet every obligation of nobility as well as ability, that his will always be the sublime example of "the good fight" of our day. He gave his all of both faith and work, and our eternal hope of the justice he trusted will always believe that somewhere there will be full compensation for Abraham Lincoln's priceless service to the well-being of mankind.

And somewhere his surviving spirit may well be saying sadly, as he loans his shawl to Lindsay - "I rendered too brief ministry, I played too brief a part."

Oh thou, that on this April day
Went down the bitter road to death,
See now thy people stumble on the way
To keep what thou hast wrought.

More proudly doth our Sangamon wind
Past thy monument to the sea.
But ah the hearts of men will find
No marble white enough for thee.

*Compliments of
Benjamin S. DeBoice.*

JUDGE BENJAMIN

S. DEBOICE :— THE SPIRITUAL

LIFE of ABRAHAM
LINCOLN.

1939. SPRING FIELD
ILLINOIS.

"THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

BY

JUDGE BENJAMIN S. DeBOICE.

It seems strange that anyone should ever have questioned the Christianity of Abraham Lincoln, but even to this day many people have an entirely erroneous conception of the religious character of the Great Emancipator. It was with the hope of counteracting some of the prevailing misconceptions that I was first moved to prepare this talk, and as my study of Abraham Lincoln's religious life progressed I became so deeply interested in it that I am frank to confess that I have gained more religious inspiration from this study than from any other religious experience of my life.

In the darkness to which men are consigned on earth, their greatest urge has been for light as to the here and the hereafter.

Lincoln himself felt this urge as much or more than any man. Billy Brown, who knew Lincoln, said, "I never knew anyone more curious about God, and anxious to know what God was drivin' at in this world." Mr. Bateman tells us that when in the Autumn of 1860, Lincoln said, "I am not a Christian, God knows I would be one," he also said, "I think more on this subject than all others, and have for years."

His path ahead too was dim, but he could not renounce the figure ever before him -- a star of hope beyond the bounds of reality and the grasp of human reasoning. No superficiality or high sounding subterfuge satisfied him. By most starkly honest groping his honest soul fumbled its way to a sincere belief in love's old certainty -- a righteous God, and His many mansions for His Children.

The secret of his pre-eminent value to us, is that he furnishes us a practical example in life as we know it. We are a Christian people, yet it is a far cry down the centuries from Nazareth to the United States, and the involved conditions of our high tension modern existence. It is not strange that with the best of intentions we are at a loss in applying to our environment the meaning of the words of Jesus uttered under the primitive demands of an ancient age; His simple, beautiful words of wisdom in old-world surroundings, to our course of decision and action. Yet all that Jesus taught, Lincoln exemplified in reaction to the demands and problems of all our present situations. He is a practical application of the Golden Rule, to life in our day, based on complete absorption of the Bible and its comprehension by a great intellect. Notwithstanding all his superiority of endowment, his feet were planted as firmly in the muck and mire of this earth as ours.

To ponder the fruits of the spirit in him is to rate him the most priceless gem in all the treasury of our human experience. How strange then all the controversy over his religious convictions, ending in chaos of result as to second-hand information, so that to this day it is not so simple to deduce conclusion. There is much more to it than the old now almost antique explanation of theological skepticism. We must take into account the man himself. Surely we may try to see him clearly without disconcertion at early imperfection but rather gratification that he whose spiritual splendor rose so grandly as to comprise in itself our modern miracle, was cut from the same cloth as our own human frailty.

In his survey of all subjects he reduced everything to elementals. So, his great thorough mentality pierced the veils of theological confusion to the realization that the only essential thing of the spirit is love, and in the heartsickness of today would that we too, could realize that never by scripture or science will faith in a loving God be kept, but only by proof of our human love.

Love that, like that of Lincoln, has conquered indifference and dominance and greed;

Love that is more than compassion and stronger than any creed. His life and character was, ever and always, the golden mean of many contradictions. He was at once the most human of men, yet of almost superhuman endowment. He was most practical, yet a man of sensitiveness, sentiment and vision. He was cautious, yet, beyond all leaders courageous and decisive in action when crisis arose. Humorous, yet of preternatural melancholy; fond of merriment and joy, yet of inescapable sadness, and with a pre delusion for shouldering adversity. Untaught, he was himself one of the greatest teachers and author of one of the world's greatest masterpieces of literature. Although one of the most ambitious men the world has ever known, he was utterly selfless. Though most

devoted to his friends, he preferred his critics and enemies in high position, when he thought his country had need of them. Though rated common, if not even uncouth, he attained an innate culture and a flight of grandeur no aristocrat ever surpassed. Supposedly the most homely and awkward president, yet we have many testimonials to an inward glow of soul which transfigured his face and form with beauty. He had integrity of purpose, high and holy enough for any cause, yet was of such humility and lack of assumption or pride of power, it was not strange his contemporaries did not realize how he towered above them. He never compromised with his conscience, yet had perfect sympathy for human frailty in others. He had kindness as large as a "prairie wind" and a heart so tender it could break for another's grief. Yet, he could be unyielding and of sternest determination when common justice or public welfare demanded it of him.

For all his modesty, while his own country doubted, blamed and reviled him; and Europe anticipated a ridiculous spectacle, he had "a self-confidence like an iron bar" in his duty and destiny to guide and save the nation. Was not this a remarkable view for him to take of himself as the instrument of Divine Providence, before he had proved it to the world? Though mercy was a longing to him, he indulged in no weakness he believed harmful to discipline and his supreme purpose to maintain the union. Contrary to popular belief, there is not the slightest evidence that he was ever imposed upon by sophisticated schemers, but on the other hand he dealt with all such with a shrewd Solomon brand of justice and sometimes indignation. Only to the under-privileged was he inclined to be lenient. Even when, as Stephen Vincent Benet puts it, he was weary and plagued by the annoyances of his high office "as the flies in fly-time plague a gaunt-headed, patient horse" he managed somehow to "keep open shop" for the humblest who came to plead for his help. To every man, woman or child who could get to him he was friend in need -- Father Abraham.

But nothing furnishes a satisfactory explanation of the preeminent character and achievement of Lincoln until we investigate his religion. Yet is it here that, to my mind, we find him most misinterpreted because of contradiction.

Undoubtedly his reaction to the unquestioning backwoods piety of his boyhood was as unorthodox as it was humorous. Yet we find that his mother, who died when he was but nine years old, had placed on him a religious stamp which was never erased. She had planted deep the seed of reverence and trust in God, which later grew into a magnificent spiritual development. Undoubtedly during his early manhood at New Salem he passed through a period of independent religious thought and exploration, so that it was not without cause that he was considered to have a dual religious personality and to have hidden a secret doubt beneath outward conformity. These things gave credence to the picture which Emil Ludwig paints of him as "A doubting Thomas who refused to join the Church," and that of his law partner, Herndon, and his close friend, Lamont, who describe him as "an infidel, athiest, and a fatalist."

On the other hand we have the conflicting opinion of many of his friends who were certain of his deep religious convictions. Jesse W. Fell asserts that Lincoln held much the same views as the famous old New England clergymen, Theodore Parker and Wm. Ellery Channing.

True it is that Lincoln never joined any religious sect or denomination. To Hon. Henry C. Deming, a member of Congress, he said: "I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long complicated statements of Christian Doctrine, which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith." But in his conversation with Mrs. Rankin, also with the painter Carpenter, as well as with congressman Deming, he summed up his whole religious feeling when he said, "When any Church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself' that Church will I join with all my heart and all my soul."

He had a profound logical mind and as a result found some exception to all the complicated creeds and doctrines, but basically he had one of the purest and most devoted souls, that ever turned in worship towards its creator. Many arguments have resulted as to his religion, but it can never be denied that no man who was not profoundly religious could, and no man who did not realize fully the importance of relig-

tion, would have said and written the things Lincoln said and wrote.

No words will ever be written to speak so well for his spiritual greatness as his own. They breathe the simple, humble beauty of sincere holiness as does the Bible itself. His farewell address to his friends and neighbors of Springfield on that cold, bleak, rainy February morning of his departure for Washington, never to return, is enshrined in our hearts forever. These immortal words bear everlasting evidence to his trusting faith in the Father of all. He said: "Without the aid of that Divine Being, who controls mine and all destinies, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you and be everywhere, for good, let us confidently hope that all will be well. To his care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you, friends and neighbors, an affectionate farewell."

From his first Inaugural address is a thought for us today. In it he said: "Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

Dr. Phineas D. Gurley remembers to have heard Lincoln say to a company of clergymen calling upon him in one of the darkest times during the Civil War: "My hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and goodness of God; and when events are very threatening I still hope that in some way all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side." At another time he varied this form of expression and said: "God is my witness that it has been my constant prayer that myself and His people shall be on the Lord's side."

In the days of his Gethsemane this driven soul, left to us, what was written for his own eyes alone to see. It is an honest effort to rationalize the Civil War with the shaping purpose behind the drift of human history toward the reign of right. In one of the darkest periods of the Civil War, he wrote on a scrap of paper which was picked up by one of the White House staff, the following: "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present Civil War it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the best instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true; that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His mere great power on the minds of the now contestants He could have saved or destroyed the Union without a Human contest. Yet the contest began, and having begun, He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."

Was not this an amazing effort to achieve childlike faith by starkly honest logic -- The most endearing the Christian world has ever witnessed?

As time went on and Lincoln's burden grew greater and greater, he was sustained more and more by his faith in the Divinity. Finding that "a believing love will relieve one of a vast load of care" when, as he said, he was forced to his knees because he had nowhere else to go. In his hour of tremendous need only God gave him strength to grapple with fate itself, and be as Dr. Newton says: "A high priest of humanity in the White House, presiding over the Nation's offering of blood and fire and tears." During those trying times we have it on unquestioned authority that Lincoln prayed constantly, both in public and private. So much evidence of this character is preserved that it seems strange that anyone should ever disagree with General Grant's statement that Lincoln's "faith was that of the Christian, that his Redeemer liveth."

On April 4, 1864, in a letter to A. G. Hodges, he said: "The result of the war is not what any man devised. I see no compliment to my own sagacity. God alone can claim it. No human counsel hath devised, nor hath mortal hand worked out these great things." Did any prophet of old walk more humbly with God?

Should other proof be required of the profound religious character of Lincoln's thoughts and actions during his years as President, we have only to turn to the series of proclamations which were issued, calling upon the people of the nation to give thanks for the success of their armies.

A study of these proclamations is quite convincing on the point of Lincoln's religious belief, for no man who was not sincerely religious could have written the things contained therein. Time will not permit me to quote at length these very interesting and enlightening documents, but suffice it to say that in the proclamations issued by President Lincoln calling upon the people to observe a special day of thanksgiving and prayer for the success of their armies, we have the most unmistakable evidence of his strong belief in the power of God, and almost every message to Congress and other State paper issued by him, bears the mark of his great spiritual being. They deserve to rank as part of our sacred literature of all time.

His second Inaugural address carries unmistakable evidence of his spiritual development and his religious surety, when in speaking of the north and South, he says:

"Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any man should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both should not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the Providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from these divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

How can the sincerity of Lincoln's belief be doubted in the face of the inexhaustible documentary evidence? But "faith without works is dead." "By their fruits ye shall know them." To this man it was given to free four millions of his fellow-beings. The crowning act of Lincoln's career was the Emancipation Proclamation. All that went before was but a preparation for it; for it he had bided his time, and when its hour had come by "the gracious favor of Almighty God" which he invoked, was Abraham Lincoln blessed.

When the time came on September 22, 1862, and Lincoln called his cabinet together concerning the Emancipation Proclamation, he said: "When the Rebel Army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation, such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to anyone, but I made the promise to myself, and to my Maker. The Rebel Army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise."

It has ever been said that the chief thing about Lincoln's life was his steady growth of power under the ever-mounting burden of sorrow and responsibility to the climax of greatness, fame and martyrdom. It was the same of his spiritual development. It was a groping and a growth towards the God of his country and mankind,—"He who made the world and still governs it."

We can never know his exact final opinion of any premise man has built on the life of Christ. He never said. He did say, "Blessed be the Churches, and blest be God, Who, in this, our hour of need, giveth us the Churches." But he was silent on all discussion of creed as it raged about him. He was never a churchman, but ever a church-goer. Perhaps he suspended judgment when his all consuming need shifted the burden of

importance from the negative to the positive side of religion. We can never know whether in the end he came to accept religion or became reconciled to some formulation of his own. Dr. Gurley's claim that Lincoln spoke to him of an intention "to make profession of his faith at some suitable time outside the Presidency" seems compatible with the sensitiveness of sincerity which caused him to delay, till after the election of '64, lest it seem political expediency, the publication of the Bixby Letter, which letter will live forever, not only as the most beautiful of all literature, but also as proof, together with his last letter to his dying father, of his own close acquaintance with the love of the Comforter.

At this time he also said to Dr. Hurley, his Washington pastor, that he could not perhaps accept all his confessions of faith, but wished only to respond to the two great commandments of Love of God and thy neighbor as thyself. Perhaps intended confession was pushed into the background by the immeasurable fullness and strain of his last years. We cannot know. We do know he said with our most advanced scientists today, that it is more difficult to deny than to affirm. We do know he prized highest of all wisdom of this earth, the Bible, he so often quoted as divine authority for men. We do know he accepted Christ as the Greatest Teacher, and presented to the world that divine conception of the true way of life. And, whatever questions of orthodoxy he asked himself, we are permitted the hope, that in the end his faith transcended them all.

If he did not believe in immortality he spent his entire life laying up treasure in a Heaven he doubted; if he had not a happy conception of human destiny, why did he bend all his labors toward the coming of the kingdom of God? He was ahead of his time. In him today fundamentalism and liberalism would be reconciled. Religion is now beyond the stage of bitter conflict over theological surety; at has come to a new-found modest acknowledgment of the incompleteness of our grasp in matters of individual and social conscience. His was a humanistic philosophy, in which there is no vital difference between righteousness of being and doing and Christianity. This is still an unthinkable attitude to some who see in it the roots of all our moral danger. It is the old difference between the spirit and the letter of the law. Could he speak more pointedly to us in all our present difficulties than in his Fast Day Proclamation of March 30, 1863? In answer to the protest against those black days of the threatened ruin of public credit, of the terror of defeat of the army of the Potomac and its loss of morale and its six hundred daily desertions, he said in his Fast Day Proclamation:

"It is the duty of Nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

"And inasmuch as we know that by His divine law, nations, like individuals, are subject to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of Civil War which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us:

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, and confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Would that the leadership of this nation today were as humble and devout as was Abraham Lincoln. Intoxicated with success, we have come to feel that our blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. We have become too self-sufficient to feel His redeeming and preserving grace; too proud to pray to the God who made us. We have forgotten God. It behooves us then, to humble ourselves in those trying times. If we today could but come a little closer to that high idealism exemplified by Abraham Lincoln, we might have hope of some day working ourselves out of our present deplorable situation.

If our public officials had that same faith in prayer and devotion to duty which Abraham Lincoln exhibited, all of our problems would be solved.

He may have ignored the Church, but surely he was its co-worker in the vineyard. At the end Abraham Lincoln believed in God, in Christ, in the Holy Bible, in the efficacy of prayer, in duty and in immortality.

Atheism can offer arguments to meet every logical defense religion can present, save one. For this one there can be no answer - a life lived like that of Abraham Lincoln. A good life lived, not for self-advancement, ease and security, is the most convincing answer to skepticism. It is not by giving formal assent to a creed predicated on the life of Christ, but by a life like Christ's, exhibiting without pretentiousness the fruits of the spirit, that carries conviction to a disbelieving world. The standard he set was one of loyalty to the cross rather than to the creed. Is not this the fundamental and irresistible message of Christianity? Not Theological or metaphysical conclusions, but an aspiration towards rightness substituted for material ambition.

Materialism counsels get all the indulgences out of life you can, for it is all a grim reality and the only way you can win is to snatch every possible pleasure at whatever cost to idealism. But the world can never mistake the answer of Abraham Lincoln to the eternal question as to the advisability of losing one's life to save it. For he lived not on things, but upon convictions, put his conscience above convenience and trusted implicitly in the eternal power of truth for the vindication of his decisions. No man was ever endowed with more common sense and shrewdness, yet never once did he retreat from his mighty idealism. He himself is convincing proof that goodness, rightness, moral stamina, charity and brotherhood, regardless of race, color or creed, are not chimerical dreams, but correspond to reality in the universe. He lived, as he firmly believed, that humanity has a certain relentless spiritual ambition. Alongside the theory of the struggle for existence and the notion of the survival of the fittest he had a firm belief that it is intolerable to suppose that the human soul is eternally doomed to unfitness. Moreover, that there are causes so worth while that a man is justified in giving his very life for their preservation. Never once did he falter beneath the crushing burden that was his on earth. Without hesitation he threw his very best out into the broad stream of time confident that it would some time reach a shore upon which it would flower forever.

So deep was the impression he made upon humanity and so nearly did he meet every expectation of nobility, as well as ability that his will always be the sublime example of "the good fight". He gave his all of both faith and work.

Eternal justice will always believe that in the great Somewhere there will be full compensation for Abraham Lincoln's priceless service to the wellbeing of mankind

Judge DeBOICE concluded this address with the quoting the poem: "Oh! FOR ANOTHER LINCOLN." by Penrose.

GOD ANSWERED PRAYER.

On July 4, 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg was victorious because that great man of God Abraham Lincoln not only prayed but had faith that God would answer his prayer. On Sunday July 5, 1863 Mr. Lincoln visited General Sickles, who was wounded during the battle of July 3. Ignoring his own injury, he asked the President what he thought of Gettysburg? Mr. Lincoln's reply was: "I had no fear of defeat, although some of the cabinet officers were a little rattled and feared Washington would be captured. I told them we were alright and would win Gettysburg, and if you really want to know I will tell you why. I don't want you to say anything about it, at least not now. The fact is, during the stress and pinch of the campaign I went to my room, and got down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for victory at Gettysburg. I told him that this was His country, and the war was His war, but that we couldn't stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. Then and there I made a solemn vow with my Maker that if He would stand by you boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by Him for the rest of my life. And He did, and I will! After this, I don't know how it was, and it is not for me to explain, but somehow or other, a sweet comfort crept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole thing into his own hands and we were bound to win Gettysburg. No, General Sickles, I had no fear of Gettysburg and that is the reason why!" The General asked about Vicksburg and Mr. Lincoln replied: "The fact is I have been praying to Almighty God for Vicksburg also."



EMANCIPATION DAY ADDRESS

Delivered at the Tomb of
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

September 22, 1941,

By

HON. BENJAMIN S. DeBOICE,
Probate Judge,
Sangamon County, Illinois.

To Lincoln National Life

From

Benjamin S. DeBoice

Nov. 22, 1941

EMANCIPATION DAY ADDRESS

Delivered at the Tomb of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

September 22, 1941,

By

HON. BENJAMIN S. DeBOICE,

Probate Judge,

Sangamon County, Illinois.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is a pleasure and a distinct honor to have the opportunity of addressing you in these hallowed walls on this, the Seventy-eighth Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

We should all feel honored, to be able to take part in this program, here in the awe inspiring tomb, where rests his immortal soul. I cannot help but feel his presence here among us, and it is almost as if he were here and in his quiet voice communing with us, in this time of National peril and saying! - "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all Nations."

And again, from his first inaugural address, we hear his words:- "intelligence, patriotism, christianity and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

When the time came on September 22, 1863, and President Lincoln called his Cabinet together concerning the Emancipation Proclamation he said,- "When the Rebel Army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation, such as I

thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to anyone, but I made the promise to myself and to my Maker. The Rebel Army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise."

It is interesting to note in this quotation, President Lincoln gave no hint of consulting his Cabinet about the wisdom of his move. He simply announced his decision, read the Proclamation and then, in substance, told his Cabinet members, if there was anything as to changes in phraseology or form, he was open to suggestions, but as to the substance, that was already settled in his mind.

By that simple act Abraham Lincoln struck the shackles from Four millions of his fellow beings, yet there was no fanfare, no blasting of trumpets, just a simple straight forward Proclamation. This act marked the United States as the most altruistic and humane Nation on the face of the globe; and we have held that distinction down through our history, even unto the present moment.

Yet today, as we stand here in the presence of his sacred clay, we are grieved that the work of Abraham Lincoln is still not completed. The race he freed from bondage is still struggling under a discouraging assortment of handicaps in our present day economic and social structure. Great progress has been made, it is true, and much legislation has been enacted into law looking toward the completion of the work of emancipation, which Abraham Lincoln so nobly started. Yet there still lingers in the hearts of men, that blind unreasoning racial prejudice which renders impotent many of the legislative gains.

The recent incidents of mistreatment of colored troops in southern camps is only illustrative of my point, that Lincoln's work is not yet finished, and here in the very shadow of his Tomb, we have other instances of the same character.

Anti-lynching laws designed to protect the rights and safety of the colored race against mob violence engendered by racial prejudice still finds hard going in the halls of our Legislative bodies, both state and national, and the task of finishing the work which Abraham Lincoln started so long ago seems almost insurmountable.

Yet I do not wish to close this talk with an unpleasant tone. Notwithstanding the despots of the south, and the copperheads of the north, who still nurture the spark of racial prejudice in their hearts, there are millions of the white race today ready, anxious and willing to give to Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation full force and effect, ready to help remove the handicaps and barricades from the path of progress of the colored race. That it is today possible to rise above these handicaps, and surmount the barriers, is illustrated by the brilliant career of Booker T. Washington, Dr. George W. Carver, E. E. Just, Dr. Daniel H. Williams, Dr. T. K. Lawless, Granville L. Woods, Elijah McCoy, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Walter White, Jesse Fossett, James Weldon, Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Henry O. Tanner, Meta Wattrick Fuller and our own Colonel Otis B. Duncan.

I wonder how many today recall the stir that was caused when Booker T. Washington was entertained at dinner in the White House, by President Theodore Roosevelt, and I wonder how many here know that it was a regiment of colored troops which rescued Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders at San Juan Hill, and, had it not been for the bravery of those same colored troops, Teddy Roosevelt and most of his command would probably have been left dead on the slopes of San Juan Hill.

The career of Dr. George Washington Carver stands out as a beacon light to his race; born of slave parents, his childhood spent in surroundings, which gave no advantage, and little promise for the future, he rose above all his handicaps, and, today, stands with Edison and Burbank, in the top rank of the scientists of our time. His scientific discoveries have lightened the burden of every American farmer, and effected every household in this country. The facts concerning his brilliant career are too little known. Likewise, the contributions of these other eminent Doctors, scientists, Educators, Literary Lights, Musicians and Soldiers, are not well enough known to their fellow citizens. This is regrettable because if the rank and file of our people knew

more of the history, and achievements, of the colored race, there would be far less of racial prejudice than we have today. The colored man has played his part in history. He was present at Bunker Hill, and has taken part in all our wars from that day down to the present. He has assumed and carried well the obligations of citizenship in this great Republic. He has contributed his share to the advancement of science, literature and art and has made a definite place for himself in our National Life. He will ultimately gain his goal of complete emancipation from the chains of racial prejudice. It is a slow process, and one that cannot be hurried, but little by little the walls of racial prejudice are crumbling away, and as time goes on, and more Booker T. Washingtons, George Washington Carvers and Otis B. Duncans, pass across the stage of human history, the time will ultimately arrive when the great work of Abraham Lincoln, started seventy-eight years ago today, will be completed and the colored race, will take its place, freed from all the handicaps and prejudices which today linger on in the hearts of men.

THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By Benjamin S. DeBoice
Probate Judge
Sangamon County
Springfield, Illinois

It seems strange that anyone should ever have questioned the Christianity of Abraham Lincoln, but even to this day many people have an entirely erroneous conception of the religious character of the great Emancipator. It was with the hope of counteracting some of the prevailing misconception that I was first moved to prepare this talk, and as my study of Abraham Lincoln's religious life progressed I became so deeply interested in it that I am frank to confess that I have gained more religious inspiration from this study than from any other religious experience of my life.

In the darkness to which men are consigned on earth, their greatest urge has ever been for light as to the here and the hereafter.

Lincoln himself felt this urge as much or more than any man. Billy Brown, who knew Lincoln, said, "I never knew anyone more curious about God, and anxious to know what God was drivin' at in this world." Mr. Bateman tells us that when in the autumn of 1860, Lincoln said, "I am not a Christian, God knows I would be one," he also said, "I think more on this subject than all others, and have for years."

His path ahead too was dim, but he could not renounce the figure ever before him - a star of hope beyond the bounds of reality and the grasp of human reasoning. No superficiality or high sounding subterfuge satisfied him. By the most starkly honest groping his honest soul fumbled its way to a sincere belief in love's old certainty - a righteous God and His many mansions for His children.

The secret of his pre-eminent value to us is that he furnishes us a practical example in life as we know it. We are a christian people, yet it is a far cry down the centuries from Nazareth to the United States, and the involved conditions of our high tension modern existence. It is not strange that with the best of intentions we are at a loss in applying to our environment the meaning of the words of Jesus uttered under the primitive demands of an ancient age; His simple, beautiful words of wisdom in old-world surroundings, to our course of decision and action. Yet, all that Jesus taught, Lincoln exemplified in reaction to the demands and problems of all our present situations. His is a practical application of the Golden Rule, to life in our day, based on complete absorption of the Bible and its comprehension by a great intellect. Notwithstanding all his superiority of endowment, his feet were planted as firmly in the muck and mire of this earth as ours.

To ponder the fruits of the spirit in him is to rate him the most priceless gem in all the treasury of our human experience. How strange then all the controversy over his religious convictions, ending in chaos of result as to second-hand information, so that to this day it is not so simple to deduce conclusion. There is much more to it than the old now almost antique explanation of theological skepticism. We must take into account the man himself. Surely we may try to see him clearly without disconsent at early imperfection but rather gratification that he whose spiritual splendor rose so grandly as to comprise in itself our modern miracle, was cut from the same cloth as our own human frailty.

In his survey of all subjects he reduced everything to elementals. So, his great thorough mentality pierced the veils of theological confusion to the realization that the only essential thing of the spirit is love, and in the heartsickness of today would that we, too, could realize that never by scripture or science will faith in a loving God be kept, but only by proof of our human love.

"Love that, like that of Lincoln, has conquered indifference and dominance and greed;

Love that is more than compassion and stronger than any creed."

His life and character was, ever and always, the golden mean of many contradictions. He was at once the most human of men, yet of almost superhuman endowment. He was most practical, yet a man of sensitiveness, sentiment and vision. He was cautious, yet, beyond all leaders, courageous and decisive in action when crisis arose. Humorous, yet of preternatural melancholy; fond of merriment and joy, yet of inescapable sadness, and with a predilection for shouldering adversity. Untaught, he was himself one of the greatest teachers, and author of one of the world's greatest masterpieces of literature. Although one of the most ambitious men the world has ever known, he was utterly selfless. Though most devoted to his friends, he preferred his critics and enemies in high position, when he thought his country had need of them. Though rated common, if not even uncouth, he attained an innate culture and a flight of grandeur no aristocrat ever surpassed. Supposedly the most homely and awkward president, yet we have many testimonials to an inward glow of soul which transfigured his face and form with beauty. He had integrity of purpose, high and holy enough for any

cause, yet was of such humility and lack of assumption or pride of power, it was not strange his contemporaries did not realize how he towered above them. He never compromised with his conscience, yet had perfect sympathy for human frailty in others. He had kindness as large as a "prairie wind" and a heart so tender it could break for another's grief. Yet, he could be unyielding and of sternest determination when common justice or public welfare demanded it of him.

For all his modesty, while his own country doubted, blamed and reviled him; and Europe anticipated a ridiculous spectacle, he had "a self-confidence like an iron bar" in his duty and destiny to guide and save the nation. Was not this a remarkable view for him to take of himself as the instrument of Divine Providence, before he had proved it to the world? Though mercy was a longing to him, he indulged in no weakness he believed harmful to discipline and his supreme purpose to maintain the union. Contrary to popular belief, there is not the slightest evidence that he was ever imposed upon by sophisticated schemers, but on the other hand he dealt with all such with a shrewd Solomon brand of justice and sometimes indignation. Only to the under-privileged was he inclined to be lenient. Even when, as Stephen Vincent Benet puts it, he was weary and plagued by the annoyances of his high office "as the flies in fly-time plague a gaunt-headed, patient horse" he managed somehow to "keep open shop" for the humblest who came to plead for his help. To every man, woman or child who could get to him he was a friend in need - Father Abraham.

But nothing furnishes a satisfactory explanation of the preeminent character and achievement of Lincoln until we investigate his religion.

Yet it is here that, to my mind, we find him most misinterpreted because of contradiction.

Undoubtedly his reaction to the unquestioning backwoods piety of his boyhood was as unorthodox as it was humorous. Yet we find that his mother, who died when he was but nine years old, had placed on him a religious stamp which was never erased. She had planted deep the seed of reverence and trust in God, which later grew into a magnificent spiritual development. Undoubtedly during his early manhood at New Salem he passed through a period of independent religious thought and exploration, so that it was not without cause that he was considered to have a dual religious personality and to have hidden a secret doubt beneath outward conformity. These things gave credence to the picture which Emil Ludwig paints of him as "A doubting Thomas who refused to join a church," and that of his law partner, Herndon, and his close friend, Lamson, who describe him as "an infidel, athiest, and a fatalist."

On the other hand we have the conflicting opinion of many of his friends who were certain of his deep religious convictions. Jesse W. Fell asserts that Lincoln held much the same views as the famous old New England clergymen, Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing.

True it is that Lincoln never joined any religious sect or denomination. To Hon. Henry C. Deming, a member of Congress, he said; "I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterize their articles of belief and confessions of faith." But in his conversation with Mrs. Rankin, also with the painter Carpenter, as

well as with Congressman Deming, he summed up his whole religious feeling when he said, "When any Church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Saviour's condensed statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself' that Church will I join with all my heart and all my soul."

He had a profoundly logical mind and as a result found some exception to all the complicated creeds and doctrines but basically he had one of the purest and most devoted souls, that ever turned in worship towards its Creator. Many arguments have resulted as to his religion, but it can never be denied that no man who was not profoundly religious could, and no man who did not realize fully the importance of religion, would have said and written the things Lincoln said and wrote.

No words will ever be written to speak so well for his spiritual greatness as his own. They breathe the simple, humble beauty of sincere holiness as does the Bible itself.

His farewell address to his friends and neighbors of Springfield on that cold, bleak, rainy February morning of his departure for Washington, never to return, is enshrined in our hearts forever. These immortal words bear everlasting evidence to his trusting faith in the Father of all. He said: "Without the aid of that Divine Being, who controls mine and all destinies, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me

and remain with you and be everywhere, for good, let us confidently hope that all will be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you, friends and neighbors, an affectionate farewell."

From his First Inaugural address is a thought for us today. In it he said:

"Intelligence, patriotism, christianity and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulties."

Dr. Phineas D. Gurley remembers to have heard Lincoln say to a company of clergymen calling upon him in one of the darkest times during the Civil War: "My hope of success in this struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and goodness of God; and when events are very threatening I still hope that in some way all will be well in the end, because our cause is just and God will be on our side." At another time he varied this form of expression and said: "God is my witness that it has been my constant prayer that myself and His people shall be on the Lord's side."

In the days of his Gethsemane this driven soul, left to us, what was written for his own eyes alone to see. It is an honest effort to rationalize the Civil War with the shaping purpose behind the drift of human history toward the reign of right. In one of the darkest periods of the Civil War, he wrote on a scrap of paper which was picked up by one of the White House staff, the following: "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and

one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present Civil War it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the best instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect His purpose. I am almost ready to say that this is probably true; that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By His more great power on the minds of the now contestants He could have saved or destroyed the Union without a Human contest. Yet the contest began, and having begun, He could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."

Was this not an amazing effort to achieve childlike faith by starkly honest logic - the most endearing the Christian world has ever witnessed?

As time went on and Lincoln's burden grew greater and greater, he was sustained more and more by his faith in the Divinity. Finding that "a believing love will relieve one of a vast load of care" when, as he said, he was forced to his knees because he had nowhere else to go. In his hour of tremendous need only God gave him strength to grapple with fate itself, and be as Dr. Newton says: "A high priest of humanity in the White House, presiding over the Nation's offering of blood and fire and tears." During those trying times we have it on unquestioned authority that Lincoln prayed constantly, both in public and private. So much evidence of this character is preserved that it seems strange that anyone should ever disagree with General Grant's statement that Lincoln's "faith was

that of the Christian, that his Redeemer liveth."

On April 4, 1864, in a letter to A. C. Hodges, he said:

"The result of the war is not what any man devised. I see no compliment to my own sagacity. God alone can claim it. No human counsel hath devised, nor hath mortal hand worked out these great things."

Did any prophet of old wlk more humbly with God?

Should other proof be required of the profound religious character of Lincoln's thoughts and actions during his years as President, we have only to turn to the series of proclamations which were issued, calling upon the people of the nation to give thanks for the success of their armies. A study of these proclamations is quite convincing on the point of Lincoln's religious belief, for no man who was not sincerely religious could have written the things contained therein. Time will not permit me to quote at length these very interesting and enlightening documents, but suffice it to say that in the proclamations issued by President Lincoln calling upon the people to observe a special day of thanksgiving and prayer for the success of their armies, we have the most unmistakable evidence of his strong belief in the power of God, and almost every message to Congress and other State paper issued by him, bears the mark of his great spiritual being. They deserve to rank as part of our sacred literature for all time.

His second Inaugural address carries unmistakable evidence of his spiritual development and his religious surety, when in speaking of the North and South, he says:

"Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the

cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsmen's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to

finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

How can the sincerity of Lincoln's belief be doubted in the face of the inexhaustible documentary evidence? But "faith without works is dead." "By their fruits ye shall know them." To this man it was given to free four millions of his fellow-beings. The crowning act of Lincoln's career was the Emancipation Proclamation. All that went before was but a preparation for it; for it he had bided his time, and when its hour had come by "the gracious favor of Almighty God" which he invoked, was Abraham Lincoln blessed.

When the time came on September 22, 1862, and Lincoln called his Cabinet together concerning the Emancipation Proclamation, he said: "When the Rebel Army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation, such as I thought most likely to be useful. I said nothing to anyone, but I made the promise to myself, and to my Maker. The Rebel Army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise."

It has ever been said that the chief thing about Lincoln's life was his steady growth of power under the ever-mounting burden of sorrow and responsibility to the climax of greatness, fame and martyrdom. It was the same of his spiritual development. It was a groping and a growth towards the God of his country and mankind, - "He who made the world and still governs it."

We can never know his exact final opinion of any premise man

has built on the life of Christ. He never said. He did say, "Blest be the Churches, and blest be God, who, in this our hour of need, giveth us the Churches." But he was silent on all dissension of creed as it raged about him. He was never a churchman, but ever a church goer. Perhaps he suspended judgment when his all-consuming need shifted the burden of importance from the negative to the positive side of religion. We can never know whether in the end he came to accept religion or became reconciled to some formulation of his own. Dr. Gurley's claim that Lincoln spoke to him of an intention "to make profession of his faith at some suitable time outside the Presidency" seems compatible with the sensitiveness of sincerity which caused him to delay, till after the election of '64, lest it seem political expediency, the publication of the Bixby Letter, which letter will live forever, not only as the most beautiful of all literature, but also as proof, together with his last letter to his dying father, of his own close acquaintance with the love of the Comforter.

At this time he also said to Dr. Gurley, his Washington pastor, that he could not perhaps accept all his confessions of faith, but wished only to respond to the two great commandments of Love of God and thy neighbor as thyself. Perhaps intended confession was pushed into the background by the immeasurable fullness and strain of his last years. We cannot know. We do know he said with our most advanced scientists today, that it is more difficult to deny than to affirm. We do know he prized highest of all wisdom of this earth, the Bible, he so often quoted as divine authority for men. We do know he accepted Christ as the Greatest Teacher, and presented

to the world that divine conception of the true way of life. And, whatever questions of orthodoxy he asked himself, we are permitted the hope, that in the end his faith transcended them all.

If he did not believe in immortality he spent his entire life laying up treasure in a Heaven he doubted; if he had not a happy conception of human destiny, why did he bend all his labors toward the coming of the Kingdom of God? He was ahead of his time. In him today fundamentalism and liberalism would be reconciled. Religion is now beyond the stage of bitter conflict over theological surety; it has come to a new-found modest acknowledgment of the incompleteness of our grasp in matters of individual and social conscience. His was a humanistic philosophy, in which there is no vital difference between righteousness of being and doing and christianity. This is still an unthinkable attitude to some who see in it the roots of all our moral danger. It is the old difference between the spirit and the letter of the law. Could he speak more pointedly to us in all our present difficulties that in his Fast Day Proclamation of March 30, 1863? In answer to the protests against those black days of the threatened ruin of public credit, of the terror of defeat of the army of the Potomac and its loss of morale and its six hundred daily desertions, he said in his Fast Day Proclamation:

"It is the duty of Nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by

all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

"And inasmuch as we know that by His divine law, nations, like individuals, are subject to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of Civil War which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us:

"It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, and confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

Would that the people of this nation today were as humble and devout as was Abraham Lincoln. Intoxicated with success, we have come to feel that our blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. We have become too self-sufficient to feel his redeeming and preserving grace; too proud to pray to the God

who made us. We have forgotten God. It behooves us then, to humble ourselves in these trying times. If we today could but come a little closer to that high idealism exemplified by Abraham Lincoln, we might have hope of some day working ourselves out of our present deplorable situation. If our public officials had that same faith in prayer and devotion to duty which Abraham Lincoln exhibited, all of our problems would be solved.

He may have ignored the Church, but surely he was its co-worker in the vineyard.

At the end Abraham Lincoln believed in God, in Christ, in the Holy Bible, in the efficacy of prayer, in duty and in immortality.

Atheism can offer arguments to meet every logical defense religion can present, save one. For this one there can be no answer - a life lived like that of Abraham Lincoln. A good life lived, not for self-advancement, ease and security, is the most convincing answer to skepticism. It is not by giving formal assent to a creed predicated on the life of Christ, but by a life like Christ's, exhibiting without pretentiousness the fruits of the spirit, that carries conviction to a disbelieving world. The standard he set was one of loyalty to the cross rather than to the creed. Is not this the fundamental and irresistible message of Christianity? Not theological or metaphysical conclusions, but an aspiration towards rightness substituted for material ambition.

Materialism counsels get all the indulgences out of life you can for it is all a grim reality and the only way you can win is to snatch every possible pleasure at whatever cost to idealism, but

the world can never mistake the answer of Abraham Lincoln to the eternal question as to the advisability of losing one's life to save it. For he lived not on things, but upon convictions, put his conscience above convenience, and trusted implicitly in the eternal power of truth for the vindication of his decisions. No man was ever endowed with more common sense and shrewdness, yet never once did he retreat from his mighty idealism. He himself is convincing proof that goodness, rightness, moral stamina, charity and brotherhood, regardless of race, color or creed, are not chimerical dreams, but correspond to reality in the universe. He lived, as he firmly believed, that humanity has a certain relentless spiritual ambition. Alongside the theory of the struggle for existence and the notion of the survival of the fittest, he had a firm belief that it is intolerable to suppose that the human soul is eternally doomed to unfitness. Moreover, that there are causes so worth while that a man is justified in giving his very life for their preservation. Never once did he falter beneath the crushing burden that was his on earth. Without hesitation he threw his very best out into the broad stream of time confident that it would some time reach a shore upon which it would flower forever.

So deep was the impression he made upon humanity and so nearly did he meet every expectation of nobility, as well as ability that his will always be the sublime example of "the good fight". He gave his all of both faith and work.

Eternal justice will always believe that in the great Somewhere there will be full compensation for Abraham Lincoln's priceless service to the well-being of mankind.

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